

The Goats of Santa Catalina

HOW THE FORETHOUGHT OF A SIXTEENTH CENTURY NAVIGATOR HAS BORNE FRUIT FOR THE SPORTSMAN OF TO-DAY

By Arthur I. Nash



ON arriving at Los Angeles we found that city in the throes of preparation for the reception of the fleet, consequently for a day or two business was out of the question. Having previously performed our patriotic duty, we at once discussed plans for the profitable employment of the days perforce at our disposal. Everyone talked Santa Catalina to us, and we were not long making up our minds to visit that famous resort. Leaving Los Angeles by trolley, we were whisked down to San Pedro, where we transferred to the good steamship *Cabrillo*, which landed us, in due course, at Avalon, Santa Catalina.

The island of Santa Catalina lies about twenty miles off the coast of Southern California. It, and its sister island, San Clemente, were discovered and named by Cabrillo, a Spanish navigator, who coasted the Californian shore in 1540-42. The precipitous shores of the island rise abruptly from deep water, of the most intense blue, to an extreme height of about 2,000 feet. Of the islands, Santa Catalina alone boasts a settlement—the little town of Avalon—which in summer is visited by hosts of tourists, campers, and anglers, attracted by its perfect summer climate and its famous fishing for sea bass, tuna, and yellowtail.

However, it is not within the province of this article to record our fishing experiences—of course we had them; who goes to Catalina and does not?—or the fascinating hours we spent, in a glass-

bottomed boat, floating idly over the placid waters of Avalon Bay, enraptured by the beauty and mysterious of the kelpian forest, which surrounds the islands, and its brilliant hued denizens.

When Cabrillo discovered this forbidding, inhospitable island, he was evidently deeply impressed by the absence of animal life on it; so he left a few of the goats he had with him, hoping that they would live, increase, and possibly succor mariners unfortunately wrecked on it. His effort was successful! The original stock not only thrived on the scanty vegetation, but multiplied wonderfully, and for some years after the development of the island as a resort, by the Bannerman Company—which, by the way, owns everything in sight—afforded rare sport to visiting sportsmen. Then extermination threatened and a close season of six years resulted, which accounted for the fact that while we were discussing the sporting possibilities of our Mecca, goats were mentioned, but we were assured that they had been “all shot off.” So we left our rifles behind, a circumstance regretted later, and on the way over speculated solely on the fishing prospects.

“Do you gentlemen want to shoot a goat while you are on the island?”

This surprising query was put to us, just as we were entering the Hotel Metropole, by a picturesque individual whose card bore the legend:

CAPT. JIM GARDNER

ORIGINAL ROD & REEL TUNA BOATMAN
AND

RECORD HOLDER OF THE WORLD

A few questions developed the fact that there were apparently plenty of the de-

scendants of Cabrillo's stock still left; so, after a brief consultation, we repaired to the company's office, applied for licenses, secured an outfit, and made all necessary arrangements for an early start on the morrow.

The morning dawned cloudless, and at half past seven we were ready to start. One complication—a bill of six dollars for the lunch—delayed us for a few moments. Brother sportsmen, we all expect to pay well for emergency rations, don't we? Well, we did, but as we had ordered only six chickens sandwiches, three oranges, two dozen ripe olives, and a canteen of distilled water, that bill was a staggerer! Diplomatic negotiation, however, finally reduced it to four dollars, with which we were content, and we were off for the mountains at last.

All hunting here is done on horses. Our mounts were tough little cow-ponies, with Mexican outfits. One other item of our equipment merits passing mention—our rifles, rented from the company. Both were .30-30 Winchesters, worn bright from constant use. To my lot fell one minus its magazine spring, which resulted in amusing experiences later: my partner's was hardly dependable. We were also provided with cartridges with full metal-patched bullets, the only kind carried in stock by the company. It is needless to dilate on this feature; every sportsman knows the result of shooting game with this kind of ammunition.

Mounting, half way down the short main street we turned into one of three little streets that divided the magnificent grove of eucalyptus trees under which the summer colony tents during "the season." The gate at its end was in sight as we entered, and passing through it we rode for three-quarters of a mile up the dry bed of the watercourse leading into the Grand Cañon. Both sides of the trail were densely bordered with sage, acacia, mesquite, and wild tobacco, the latter in full bloom. The air of early morning was deliciously cool and sweet. On either hand the mountains rose sheer above the stream, their smooth, brown sides devoid of vegetation, excepting for an occasional bunch of sage, or the universally deserted prickly pear.

Jim, who was riding ahead, suddenly jerked his horse to a standstill.

"Look! Look there! See those goats!" he exclaimed.

We eagerly scanned the crest of the high ridge pointed out, a mile or more away, and beheld diminutive specks appear momentarily against the sky line, instantly disappearing as they dropped over onto the side towards us. Excitedly we greeted each with "There's another!" until twenty-six had been counted, and a long wait proclaimed the passing of the band.

"There's some big billies in that bunch all right," said Jim, and we began to climb for them.

It was climbing, for sure! The crumbling soil of the almost perpendicular shoulder confronting us, necessitated dismounting; so we led our ponies in zig-zags up its steep face. My nag groaned and grumbled as the ground slid from under him, but we reached the top safely, and after a "breather," mounted and rode on a mile or so until we reached a rocky ridge, thickly studded with prickly pear, overlooking the cañon towards which the goats were making.

My horse would stand anywhere by simply dropping the trail-rope. The other two we had to hitch. Tying them to a clump of sage just below the crest of the ridge, we lay down and wormed ourselves forward to the edge, and, peering over, beheld a beautiful bunch of goats unconcernedly feeding along the steep side of the cañon, about 400 yards away. They were a curiously interesting group, and, like Jacob's coat, were all colors, black, yellow, gray, and pure white—both straight and in combination—and their gimlet-like horns, to our excited gaze, looked perfectly enormous.

By comparison, the steepest-pitch roof you ever saw would have been flat beside the wall of that cañon. It was almost perpendicular, and composed of jagged, rotten rock and crumbling soil. We watched the goats do climbing stunts—everything, from standing on their hind feet on the knife edge of a ledge to reach some extra choice morsel above, to standing on their heads in going straight down. Caution, decision, and accuracy marked every moment. It was marvelous how



"... TOUGH LITTLE COW-PONIES, WITH MEXICAN SADDLES ..."

they hung on, but examination of the feet of the specimens we secured explained it. Their hoofs are cases of thin, flinty enamel inclosing spongy cartilaginous matter which yields upon contact with hard surfaces, allowing the cup-shaped case to firmly grip the minutest holding projections.

Our first position was not advantageous; so while I remained to keep tab on the goats, Jim and my partner worked along the crest to a position within 150 yards and opened fire. At the first report the goats bunched; the second started them climbing down in dignified haste. Succeeding shots sent them "rocking" along the gentler, lower slope towards cover, and the way they got over the ground was surprising. In less time than it takes to write this they were safe in the thick cover at the bottom of the cañon, and our first encounter was over—all the honors with the goats. None of our shots had been effective.

Then followed a long sneak, always up and up; perspiration pouring down our faces; hearts thumping as if they would burst our chests; our breaths a series of gasps—my, but the sun was hot! Over the edge of another towering ridge we peeped, and were rewarded by the sight

of another band of goats, upon which we both opened fire, picking the big billies out of the kaleidoscopic moving mass as best we could. But as we were shooting strange guns, and the range was from 200 to 400 yards, again there was "nothing doing."

Here it was decided to go back for the horses. My companions volunteered for this task. Climbing a still higher peak I filled my pipe and sat down to enjoy the view. It was superbly grand! There was little or no wind. The rolling landscape shimmered and undulated in the heat. Beyond was the sea—such an ultramarine blue as one reads about but seldom sees. To the south lay the shadowy outline of San Clemente; eastward, the indistinct contour of the mainland, crowned by the cloud-capped peaks of the Sierras. On all this I feasted my eyes until the boys returned.

We rode along the little goat paths, scarce four inches wide, running just below the crest of the steep-sided mountains. The sure-footedness of our ponies was wonderful. The soil constantly gave way under them, and they simply braced all four feet, ploughed to a standstill, and then regained the trail. There was nothing between us and a roll of perhaps 1,400

feet, down a cactus-besprinkled declivity the steepness of which must be seen to be appreciated, but our goat-footed ponies. They soon won our complete confidence.

We had nearly reached Silver Cañon when we sighted another band of goats, and this time the fates were with us—or, at least, with Jim and my partner. This band was working along a rocky spur dividing a large cañon. We figured out that by going down the back side of the spur, a close shot could be secured. This my companions attempted, while I remained at the top of the pass, through which the goats had entered the cañon, believing that the first shot would turn them back that way. After what seemed an interminable wait the hunters appeared, halfway down the ridge, looking anxiously for the goats, which, in the meantime, had fed beyond the point and were out of their sight. I wigwagged frantically, and finally they caught on and hurriedly disappeared behind the ridge again, and shortly began shooting.

Just about this time I was loudly cursing my luck (or ill luck), when suddenly three billys—big black and white ones—appeared, making up the cañon for the pass where I was posted. It was a mutual discovery. Wheeling about, they started for a sag crossing the spur between my companions and myself. A heart-breaking run of a quarter of a mile enabled me to head them off, and, with heart thumping and arms ashake, I opened on them. They were below me, and my springless

be worked to reload. It was maddening, but fortunate, for the long wait between shots had a steadying effect. Out of five shots I could see that two goats had been hit and were making slow progress toward the crest of the pass. All three passed out of sight in a gully. Then followed another heart-breaking sprint up the mountain; but in spite of the fact that I had the short end of the run, the goats got there seventy-five yards or so ahead of me. Seeing the horses they hesitated for one brief, but fatal moment, for one dropped dead with a broken neck (I was shooting *up* the hill this time and didn't have to wait for the magazine to "get into gear") and the other rolled down the slope shot through the shoulders. Then I sprinted down to the boys again.

"Say, but you look like an animated pin-cushion!"

One glance was enough. My headlong flights up and down the mountain had been made with eyes rooted on the goats; consequently I had made the pointed acquaintance of many a clump of prickly pear. I sat down to pull out the spines—it seemed as if there was a million—but I didn't care much *then*, for hadn't we been successful? But when my knees swelled up that night, so that it was all I could do to hobble upstairs, I fully realized that I had been "up against it hard."

Jim and my partner, the lucky dog, had shot three. It seems that they had crawled to the end of the spur, reaching it simultaneously with the goats. For a while we were surrounded with made the most of the



SANTA CATALINA GAME



TROPHIES OF THE HUNT

opportunity. They had one big tawny billy, whose gimlet-like horns spread twenty-five and one-fourth inches and from base to tip measured twenty-two and three-fourth inches; one black-and-white with somewhat smaller spread, and another pure white goat with small but very pretty horns. We skinned out the heads, and returned to my specimens near the horses. Examination showed that the goat with the broken neck had been hit three times before the fatal shot—through the shoulders and the paunch, and forward of right hip, this bullet ranging forward and coming out just back of the opposite shoulder. With soft-nosed bullets either shot would have proved quickly fatal, but the full metal-patched bullets had simply

bored nice, clean, little holes through him without seriously interfering with his ability to take at least reasonably good care of himself.

After skinning out the remaining heads, we ate our four-dollar lunch, in the scanty shade offered by struggling sage bushes, photographed everything in sight, and started for Avalon. Going down the mountains was even worse than climbing up. How our ponies succeeded in clinging to their precarious footing I don't know, but except for Jim's horse going down on his knees once, we accomplished the trip safely. Arriving at the little street, we put our ponies to a run and dashed down the main thoroughfare to the hotel in true cowboy style.

Where Labor Sings

By Stokely S. Fisher

Broad fields of green with golden daisies
strown;

Soft lisp of trees where slumberous insects
drone;

Faint o'er the leas, on light winds blown along,

Oh, happy days, unmarred by selfish moil!
No fret of nerves, no stride for right to
toil;

Pure women who make homes, free man-
hood strong.